

COST OF LIVING — FEES AND CHARGES

**296. Ms M.J. DAVIES to the Premier:**

I refer to the increase in government fees and charges by \$1 050 a year since 2017 and comments by Anglicare WA chief executive officer Mark Glasson that the budget was lazy policy and left his organisation bewildered. Why has the Premier failed to deliver meaningful cost-of-living relief to Western Australian families?

**Mr M. McGOWAN replied:**

Madam Speaker, that question ignores everything that occurred in the budget. In the budget that was handed down on Thursday, the totality of fees and charges by government to ordinary Western Australians, the cost of that, will go down in the next financial year by 3.8 per cent. We are the only government in Australia doing that without increasing debt, yet the Leader of the Opposition complains about it. I was at a function last night at the Australian Hotels Association accommodation awards and a couple of people came up to me, who work in accommodation with ordinary incomes and the like, and said, “You’re the only government that has ever given us anything.” These are people who work at the front desk, in cleaning, in maintenance or what have you in a major hotel. Two women came up to me and said, “Your government is the only one who has ever given us anything. No-one has ever given us anything before. We never received anything from government to help us with cost of living. You are giving us \$400 from 1 July to help us with our electricity bills and you gave us \$600 back in October 2020 to help us with our electricity bills.” Then one of the women said, “And I just got my 15 RATs today.” I assume that if they live in the outer suburbs, they are getting the two-zone fare, which is saving them potentially thousands of dollars each year. That is what we are doing: a 3.8 per cent reduction in the totality of the basket of household goods and fees, services, water, electricity, licensing fees and the like, all across the board in Western Australia, without increasing debt. When the commonwealth puts in place initiatives, and they are not for everyone, all it is doing is adding it to the credit card. We are paying down debt at the same time as providing this support for families in Western Australia.

In terms of that specific organisation, indexation funding was provided to not-for-profit organisations to the tune, from memory, of about \$100 million to assist them with ongoing increases in costs and a whole range of social justice initiatives across the board that the Minister for Community Services has rolled out, particularly additional child protection officers and the like. For the first time since the commonwealth Liberal–National government pulled out of funding remote Aboriginal communities, we are using our good financial management to put in place a \$350 million down payment on providing maintenance services, electricity, water and new housing for Aboriginal communities. That is what we are doing. I realise the Nationals and Liberals in Western Australia always want to look for the negative in everything, but that is the truth of what this government is providing, because we manage the finances well, because we kept COVID out and because we kept our royalty streams coming into Western Australia, we are supporting people across the board across Western Australia.